



# Human Rights Defense Center

DEDICATED TO PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

December 31, 2015

The Honorable Tom Wheeler, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St. S.W.  
Washington DC 20554

## **Re: Comment for WC Docket 12-375**

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

The Human Rights Defense Center (HRDC) respectfully submits this comment for WC Docket No. 12-375 in reference to the following press release issued by Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe announcing a reduction in prison phone rates effective December 1, 2015:

- “Governor McAuliffe Announces Further Reduction on Inmate Phone Call Rates” (December 23, 2015) [Attachment 1].

The release states that the Virginia DOC (VA DOC) has worked with Global Tel\*Link (GTL) over the past five years “to lower phone rates drastically” and that offenders now pay about \$0.04/min. HRDC confirmed with Lisa Kinney, VA DOC’s Director of Communications that the rate is \$0.0409/min for **all** calls [Attachment 2], which calculates to a cost of \$0.62 for a 15-minute call. VA DOC does not receive a kickback from GTL.

We note with interest the quote from Brian Oliver, CEO of GTL in the Governor’s press release dated December 23, 2015:

“This is an excellent example of how partners who share common goals can work together to reduce the cost of phone calls to friends and family members *and still provide the necessary security and safety features to protect the public.*” (emphasis added)  
[Attachment 1 at Page 1].

This statement is in stark contrast to comments made by some ICS providers and corrections officials with respect to the costs of providing ICS services where they claim that the rate caps set by the FCC do not account for their security needs and profit desires. Once again, we believe the lack of transparency in the ICS industry in terms of their profit margins, how they obtain contracts, etc., harms consumers and the public at large. We urge the FCC to use its subpoena power to independently review the actual costs and profitability of the major ICS providers.

Thank you for your time and attention in this regard.

Sincerely,



Paul Wright.  
Executive Director, HRDC

Attachments 1-2

# **Attachment 1**

(<http://www.virginia.gov/>)

**For Immediate Release:** December 23, 2015

**Contacts:** Office of the Governor: Brian Coy, (804) 225-4260, [Brian.Coy@governor.virginia.gov](mailto:Brian.Coy@governor.virginia.gov) | Virginia Department of Corrections, Lisa Kinney, 804-674-3275, [lisa.kinney@vadoc.virginia.gov](mailto:lisa.kinney@vadoc.virginia.gov)

## Governor McAuliffe Announces Further Reduction on Inmate Phone Call Rates

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~VADOC Has Drastically Lowered Rates In Recent Years; Average Call Now \$0.69~

**RICHMOND** - Governor Terry McAuliffe today announced that offenders in Virginia's prisons can now stay in touch with loved ones by way of some of the lowest phone call rates in the country.

The Virginia Department of Corrections has worked with its offender phone service provider, Global Tel\*Link (GTL), to lower phone rates drastically over the last five years. Offenders will now pay about \$0.04 per minute.

"Recognizing how important family support is to offenders as they serve their time and prepare to reenter the community, Virginia has been leading the charge to bring affordable phone service to incarcerated offenders," **said Governor McAuliffe**. "This is a significant milestone in the Commonwealth's reentry efforts."

In 2010, the average cost of a phone call from a Virginia facility was \$4.06; by October 2015, the average had fallen to \$1.48. With the new rates, an average call will cost \$0.69. These rates took effect on December 1, 2015.

"This is an excellent example of how partners who share common goals can work together to reduce the cost of phone calls to friends and family members and still provide the necessary security and safety features to protect the public," **said Brian Oliver, CEO of GTL**.

"Knowing that there will always be security costs for the DOC associated with offender phone calls, we appreciate the Department's efforts to make phone service affordable for offenders," **said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran**.

"We are in the business of helping people make better choices," **said Harold Clarke, VADOC Director**. "Research shows us that increased pro-social family ties support a reduction in recidivism and are an important part of the reentry process. We're pleased that working with GTL, we're able to offer significantly

less expensive calls than in years past." The Department of Corrections does not receive commissions from offender phone calls.

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## GOVERNOR TERRY MCAULIFFE

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## AT YOUR SERVICE

ConnectVA (<https://www.connectva.org>)

eVA website (<https://logi.epro.cgifdc.com/Public/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Public.PublicLandingPage&rdRnd=60061>)

Expenditures ([http://datapoint.apa.virginia.gov/exp/exp\\_checkbook\\_agency.cfm?AGYCODE=121](http://datapoint.apa.virginia.gov/exp/exp_checkbook_agency.cfm?AGYCODE=121))

State Agencies (<https://www.virginia.gov/government/state-employees/agency-directory>)

Cities & Counties (<http://www.virginia.org/citiestownsandcountiesrelatedlinks/>)

Elected Officials (<http://www.virginia.gov/government>)

## SITE RESOURCES

Website Feedback (<https://governor.virginia.gov/email-the-webmaster/>)

Web Privacy Policy ([/web-policy](#))

Accessibility (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG1A-Conformance>)

Site Map ([/site-map/](#))

Unsubscribe from email lists ([/governor.virginia.gov/unsubscribe](#))

## STAY CONNECTED

Governor Terry McAuliffe

**Common Ground for Virginia**

P.O. Box 1475

Richmond, VA 23218

804-786-2211

Email the Governor (<https://governor.virginia.gov/constituent-services/Communicating-with-the-governors-office>)

## **Attachment 2**



## Carrie Wilkinson

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**From:** Kinney, Lisa E. (VADOC) <Lisa.Kinney@vadoc.virginia.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 30, 2015 7:46 AM  
**To:** Carrie Wilkinson  
**Subject:** RE: New Inmate Telephone Rates

Agreed – communications with supportive family and friends can be such an important part of the reentry process. Yes, that is the rate for all calls (plus any taxes that might apply).

Best,  
Lisa

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**From:** Carrie Wilkinson [<mailto:cwilkinson@humanrightsdefensecenter.org>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 29, 2015 10:39 AM  
**To:** Kinney, Lisa E. (VADOC)  
**Subject:** RE: New Inmate Telephone Rates

Thank you – can you confirm that the rate is for all calls: interstate (state-to-state), intrastate (in-state), and local?

This is excellent news that will help many prisoners and their families.

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**From:** Kinney, Lisa E. (VADOC) [<mailto:Lisa.Kinney@vadoc.virginia.gov>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 29, 2015 7:19 AM  
**To:** Carrie Wilkinson  
**Subject:** RE: New Inmate Telephone Rates

Hi, Carrie. Yes, our last release on phone rates was in October; this latest release was issued by the Governor's office. You can find it here: <http://governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/newsarticle?articleId=13740>

The rate is now .0409 cents/minute.

Best,  
Lisa

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Lisa E. Kinney, Esq.  
Director of Communications  
Virginia Department of Corrections  
804-674-3275  
[lisa.kinney@vadoc.virginia.gov](mailto:lisa.kinney@vadoc.virginia.gov)



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**From:** Carrie Wilkinson [<mailto:cwilkinson@humanrightsdefensecenter.org>]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 28, 2015 2:39 PM



**To:** Kinney, Lisa E. (VADOC)

**Subject:** New Inmate Telephone Rates

Hello,

I am with the Human Rights Defense Center, publisher of *Prison Legal News*. An article just came across my feed regarding new VA DOC inmate phone rates through GTL that became effective 12/1/15. Can you please forward me the new rates so we can get them posted? The article says "about \$.04/min," I want to be sure we are accurate. I checked your Press Releases and Media Advisories and didn't see anything since the last Press Release in October 2015.

Thank you and Happy New Year!

Carrie Wilkinson

*Prison Phone Justice Director*

**Human Rights Defense Center**

801 Second Ave., Suite 800

Seattle, WA 98104

Office: 206.489.5604

Cell: 206.604.6145

[www.humanrightsdefensecenter.org](http://www.humanrightsdefensecenter.org)